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Executive Registry

66-3025/A

NSC REVIEW  
COMPLETED,  
6/26/2003

18 JUL 1966

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Honorable Robert W. Komer  
Special Assistant to the PresidentSUBJECT: Report to the President on Your Recent  
Trip to Vietnam, 1 July 1966

You very kindly invited my reaction to your report to the President on your latest trip to Vietnam. I find myself in accord with your general conclusions as to the situation in the area and the long road ahead. As you know, I also fully agree with your view as to the importance of increasing the emphasis on our pacification and civilian operations, as without this even successful military operations will not produce a lasting result.

With respect to how to accomplish this greater emphasis, you lay a great deal of emphasis on better organizational approaches to the job, both on the Vietnamese and American side. Because of the weakness of the Vietnamese which you note as one of our problems, you quite properly emphasize the need to step up the American effort to compensate. To provide additional manpower, you suggest a greater engagement of MACV in the civilian aspects of pacification, at both central staff and district levels. This appears on the surface a quite reasonable judgment and one can only support the idea of increasing the contribution of our military resources to the overall pacification problem. I do suggest, however, that these steps may have to be watched very carefully in order that they not inadvertently alter the essentials of our pacification effort, which to date has given great weight to irregularity, local characteristics and individuality of leadership.

While we refer to the "civilian" aspects of pacification, I believe that the greatest element of the program is its political content.

The various civilian institutions, police structures, administrative programs, etc. are in truth merely supporting additives to the key political heart of a successful pacification program. Engagement of the population in a pacification effort, to secure its collaboration in expunging the Communist fish from the popular sea, must come as a result of a motivated population, not merely an administered one. Too much emphasis on our side on the administrative aspects can result in the major effort being put in this field with only lip service given to the importance of political motivation. This is particularly possible, of course, when our pressure upon the population is aimed at eliminating the enemy from its ranks rather than primarily to stimulate the community to better itself, and incidentally to purge itself of elements hostile to this process. A particular fondness of Vietnamese officialdom for eyewash pleasing to superiors has frequently led to such mistake in emphasis, i.e., counting barbed wire stretched, piglets distributed, or mass public pledges of loyalty.

I am sure you have no basic disagreement with these thoughts, but I do believe that as we review the organizational aspects of the pacification job, we should be very sure that all Americans engaged in the program start from its basic principle of motivating the population as its guiding doctrine, rather than its statistical successes in terms of VC KIA or otherwise. This would be particularly important for MACV district teams asked to "keep an eye" on the RDC teams, as the standards they use and their command levels impose will clearly dictate their measurement of their effectiveness. With this approach, the various steps you propose seem unexceptionable; without it, I would have concern over some of the suggestions you make. There is a great difference between arousing local partisans and organizing a national soldiery.

Aside from these general remarks, I should like to offer comments on some of your specific points:

a. Study of Roles and Missions. This is a highly appropriate effort. Strengthening of the civilian or political command structure vis-a-vis the military in the pacification program would be a highly appropriate result of such a study. Of greatest importance is the strengthening of the local structure of pacification, of course, and improvement up the line, rather than from the top down.

b. Province Team Chief. If these should be revived for more efficient coordination of the Americans in a province, they are critical figures to whom the general thoughts I expressed above must be put across. Our experience has been one of considerable success in working locally with other agencies on a cooperative basis and some problems under a formal team chief. Some of these stemmed from the nature of our intelligence or operational work; some stemmed from the degree of emphasis given by the chief in question to the political heart of the pacification program.

c. RD Cadre Program. The problem of supervision of the RD Cadre teams is one on which I believe our Station is making considerable progress at this time, although I cannot contest your statement that we cannot match the MACV presence throughout the districts. Against the apparent desirability of this greater engagement of local Americans with the teams however, I do suggest that some thought be given to the impact of this attention on the mission and political content of the work of the teams. It may well be that a search for perfection in management through close American review of the work of the teams may create very substantial problems with the teams themselves, their political mission and their reception as "revolutionary" Vietnamese.

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e. Area Priorities. I fully concur with your comments on areas for pacification work. Pacification is so heavily dependent on the exploitation of popular attitudes that I fully agree that we should exploit areas of movement and not batter remorselessly against targets fixed by selection from the map. This is another area in which the importance of flexibility may be greater than the apparent virtues of firm planning.

This memorandum has addressed itself to your trip report. You are aware separately of my concern over CIA's responsibilities and role with respect to the Revolutionary Development Cadre program. I have sent Mr. Colby to Saigon to secure a clear statement of the Mission's recommendations on these points per the message he showed Ambassador Leonhart last week, a copy of which is attached. The above comments on your trip report should be read in the light of this message as well.

/s/ Richard Helms

Richard Helms  
Director

Attachment

Message to Ambassadors Lodge and Porter

Signature Recommended:

(S) Raymond FitzGerald

15 JUL 1966

Deputy Director for Plans

Date

Distribution:

- 2 - Addressee w/a
- ✓ 2 - DCI w/a
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CFE:WECdby:pc (14 July 1966)

14 July 1966

TO SAIGON

TO AMBASSADORS LODGE AND PORTER FROM RICHARD HELMS

1. IN THE PAST FEW WEEKS THERE HAS BEEN INTENSIVE REVIEW HERE OF THE REVOLUTIONARY DEVELOPMENT CADRE PROGRAM AND, IN PARTICULAR, THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR ITS FINANCING, LOGISTICS SUPPORT AND MONITORING. BUREAU OF THE BUDGET HAS GIVEN SOME PRELIMINARY INDICATIONS OF BELIEVING THAT THE FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR THE PROGRAM FOR FY 1967 AT LEAST WILL HAVE TO BE OBTAINED BY THIS AGENCY FROM CONGRESS RATHER THAN, AS WE HAD SUGGESTED, HAVING US HANDLE FUNDS PROVIDED BY AID AND DOD. THIS MAY POSE SOME PROBLEMS INASMUCH AS OUR APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEES HAVE EXPRESSED CONSIDERABLE CONCERN ABOUT THE PROPRIETY OF INCLUDING FUNDS FOR THIS TYPE OF OVERT ACTIVITY IN OUR COVERT BUDGET. IT IS CLEAR ALSO THAT THE LOGISTICS BURDEN OF THIS OPERATION WILL BE HEAVY INDEED AND THAT BOTH CONGRESS AND THE BUREAU WILL CLOSELY EXAMINE THE LARGE EXPENDITURES INVOLVED.

2. TO THE EXTENT OF OUR ABILITY WE ARE QUITE WILLING TO ASSUME ANY TASK THE PRESIDENT MAY DIRECT TO ASSIST IN THE IMPORTANT EFFORT IN VIETNAM. HOWEVER, THESE PROBLEMS HAVE COINCIDED WITH SOME QUESTION AS TO THE PRECISE SCOPE AND STATUS OF THE RDC PROGRAM AND THE PRECISE DEGREE OF RESPONSIBILITY AND AUTHORITY OUR AGENCY HAS

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WITH RESPECT TO IT. AT THE MOMENT WE HAVE NO VERY CLEAR CHARTER IN THIS FIELD AND WE ARE UNCERTAIN AS TO THIS AND OTHER AGENCIES' ROLES IN THE COMMAND LINE AND THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR INJECTION OF AID PERSONNEL AND AUTHORITY INTO THE PROGRAM. WE REGRET KOMER'S ABSENCE FROM WASHINGTON UNTIL SOMETIME NEXT WEEK PRECLUDES SHOWING HIM THIS CABLE, ALTHOUGH WE HAVE SHOWN IT TO AMBASSADOR LEONHART AND WILL DO SO TO MR. KOMER NEXT WEEK.

3. WE HAVE NO FUNDS YET RELEASED FOR THE EXPANDED PROGRAM INCLUDING CONSTRUCTION OF  ALTHOUGH WE HAVE AGREED TO REPROGRAM SOME OF OUR REGULAR FUNDS TO DO THE NECESSARY PRELIMINARY WORK. THE OVERALL FUNDING PROBLEM, HOWEVER, MUST BE RESOLVED BEFORE WE CAN PROCEED MUCH FURTHER WITH THE EXPANDED PROGRAM INCLUDING CONSTRUCTION OF THE NEW CAMP FOR WHICH WE NEED THE STRONGEST POSSIBLE JUSTIFICATION.

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4. I AM ASKING MR. COLBY TO VISIT YOU NEXT WEEK AND TO STAY AS LONG AS NECESSARY TO RESOLVE THESE PROBLEMS TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE. SPECIFICALLY, I WOULD HOPE THAT HE CAN WORK WITH MR. HART AND SUCH OTHER MEMBERS OF YOUR STAFF AS YOU MAY DESIRE TO PREPARE FOR YOU A CLEAR-CUT STATEMENT OF YOUR RECOMMENDATIONS AS TO THE ROLE OF THIS AGENCY IN THIS PROGRAM AS WELL AS THE ROLES OF DOD AND AID. WE NEED THESE DEFINED AS PRECISELY AS POSSIBLE FOR BOTH

THE SHORT AND LONG TERM WITH TIMING FOR ANY CONTEMPLATED  
TRANSITION. WE NEED URGENTLY YOUR PRECISE RECOMMENDATIONS WITH  
REGARD TO THIS IMPORTANT MATTER IN ORDER TO EXPEDITE RESOLUTION  
OF THE VARIOUS PROBLEMS AT THE WASHINGTON LEVEL AND TO AVOID  
FURTHER DELAY IN EXPANDING THE PROGRAM.

END OF MESSAGE



66 30241  
66 30254  
15 JUL 1966

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence  
VIA: Deputy Director for Plans  
SUBJECT: Komer Report to the President on Vietnam

1. This memorandum suggests that action be taken as stated in paragraph 2.

2. Attached is a proposed reply to Mr. Robert Komer commenting on his report to the President on his recent trip to Vietnam. It is suggested that the Director sign the attached letter to Mr. Komer.

William E. Colby  
Chief, Far East Division

Attachment

DD/P 6-2961

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

SECRET

2 July 1966

Executive Registry

66-302511

MEMORANDUM FOR: Secretary of State  
Secretary of Defense  
Administrator, AID  
Director of Central Intelligence ✓  
Director, USIA

Attached is my report to the President on my latest trip to Vietnam. I hope it will be of interest, and would appreciate any reactions.

Because certain portions are quite sensitive, I would be grateful if it did not receive any wider circulation.

*R. W. Komer*

R. W. Komer  
Special Assistant  
to the President

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MEMORANDUM

Approved For Release 2003/09/02 : CIA-RDP80B01676R000100060007-0

Executive Registry

46 - 3025

## THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

SECRET

1 July 1966

DD/P 629/1

## MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Second Komer Trip to Vietnam, 23-29 June 1966

This trip was far more valuable than my first. By now I've established sound working relations with all the key people, and have begun to find out the real problems.

I try to make these visits both educational (for me) and cathartic (for others). In the course of a week I talked with 60-70 Americans from Lodge and Westy on down to sergeants, and at least 60 Vietnamese from Ky down to villagers. Each got a tailored pep talk.

I. General Conclusions. I return both an optimist and a realist. Optimistic because Westy's spoiling operations are going well; his prudent concern that a monsoon "offensive" is still in the offing is partly offset by abundant evidence that the VC has lost a lot of steam despite the infusion of strength from the north. Optimistic also because our own civil side effort has finally gotten off the ground, and because the GVN itself has a new wind--born of its success in containing the Buddhist bid for power over the last three months. It is taking pacification more seriously too. Third, we've got the economic situation under better control. In short, the US/GVN effort is greater and more efficient than ever before--though one keeps wondering why it takes so long.

But is all this enough? The more I learn the more I'm sobered by the realization of how much further we may have to go. On the military side, our intelligence is improving but it is still only one in several sweeps that really catches and clobbers a VC main force unit. Nonetheless, Westy sees the VC/NVA as committed to a classical Phase III Maoist strategy rather than reverting to guerilla war. He thinks they are trying to concentrate in divisional strength in at least 8-10 different areas. Their aim is to tie down our forces by synchronized though widely separated attacks and hopefully to overwhelm us in at least some cases. Westy's counterstrategy is to mount spoiling attacks, hitting the VC first wherever he can pinpoint a concentration. He seems to be keeping them off balance.

But our military effort against the VC is not yet matched by our pacification and civil side operations. Our greatest weakness is our inability as yet to capitalize on the initiative our own military operations have given us by extending our control over the countryside. We have stopped the erosion of GVN control, but I would

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judge that we have not really extended our control significantly outside the main towns over the last year. Until we can get rolling on pacification in its widest sense --securing the villages, flushing out the local VC (not just the main force) and giving the peasant both security and hope for a better future--we cannot assure a victory.

The weak link in the chain is the GVN and the ARVN. We must get a greater return out of them--and it would be cheap at the price. The 700,000 ARVN forces are not pulling their weight. Nor is the GVN civil side. The US is bearing the brunt of the effort--which is neither necessary nor desirable.

My two main conclusions from this trip are that we must (a) step up our own support of pacification/RD; and (b) galvanize the GVN and ARVN into a much greater --and better--effort in this field. There are some encouraging signs that this is feasible. My ideas as to how to do it follow--they differ in some significant respects from the views in my 14 June memo to you (which proves to me that trips are quite useful).

II. Stepping up the RD/Pacification Effort. This is essentially a matter of better management of US/GVN resources, and of generating enough resources to meet the need.

On the US management side, there is encouraging progress. Porter has recognized that he can't run a billion dollar enterprise without a staff. He is organizing one, headed by Ambassador Koren, a top notch FSO. He'll report 10 July. With Westy's help, I've also urged Porter to get a good general officer as No. 3, because better civil/military coordination is essential. Most of our pacification people in the field are military--some 2200 MACV advisers working at least part time on pacification vs. some 300 odd civilians.

Also most encouraging is Ky's plan to give General Thang, the highly energetic RD Minister, super-ministerial supervision over the Agriculture, Public Works, and perhaps Information Ministries--as well as the Regional and Popular Forces. This step should serve to integrate control over the key security, cadre, and reconstruction assets in the countryside under probably the most capable man in the GVN. Equally important, the province chief will now be given more direct control over the local RF/PF security assets available. Divided authority between the province chief (usually a Lieutenant Colonel) who is pacification-minded and the ARVN regimental, division and corps commanders--who often are not--has been a serious problem. In my visits to five provinces I found this a concern of US advisors as well as province and district chiefs.

Next steps. We may need to go further in this direction, however. The crazy quilt pattern of ARVN and local forces has further proliferated over the past year as

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pacification concepts have evolved. Now Police Field Force companies--which Westy has come around to favoring--and RD cadre teams have been added. The security element of the 59-man RD cadre team roughly equates to a Popular Force platoon; a Police Field Force company is not much different than a Regional Force Company. Confusion exists as to the proper roles and missions of each component of the pacification forces. There are also a number of hangovers from earlier programs, such as auto-defense forces and Combat Youth.

So Porter and I started a high priority study by a top notch inter-agency group in Saigon to redefine these functions. Then, working with the GVN, the Mission hopes that the roles and missions of pacification forces can be precisely defined by a GVN decree. Such a rationalization of roles and missions might also lead to certain consolidations and overhead reductions--essential as well for meeting the growing Vietnamese manpower shortage.

Some of the most knowledgeable and imaginative experts also believe that there is a critical lack of enough bodies to extend GVN control further into the countryside and provide security for the RD effort. They say that all the RF, PF, Cadres, and police put together are not enough to do more than hold the present real estate the GVN controls. One solution advocated is to shift many of the ARVN regular units--which are not pulling their weight in the battle against the VC main force anyway--into local security work. Those who advocate this solution would break up the lower grade ARVN units into battalions and put them under the province chiefs. They argue that when regular ARVN units are committed to a pacification (clearing and security) role, the ARVN regimental/division/corps levels frequently inhibit the proper tactical employment of company and battalion-sized units.

This highly important matter of the GVN military and para-military structure merits open-minded investigation. It is plain that whatever change in operational roles or chain of command might be contemplated, the present MACV-supported logistic and administrative structure must be maintained. No one else could do the job. There might also be local political complications in disturbing the present distribution of military power. Major changes would doubtless be stoutly opposed by many in MACV or elsewhere. But as MACV necessarily devotes more and more attention to an ever larger US military effort, it inevitably becomes less of an advisory group and more of an operational headquarters. So experienced hands like General Krulak in Honolulu support a re-examination of this whole problem area.

The MACV advisory effort. Whatever is done about the above, however, the MACV province and district advisory effort is indispensable--and one of the bright spots in Vietnam. We have 153 subsector (district) teams in 75% of the districts now and MACV is considering 12 more. They are really the backbone of our effort in the countryside. Their high quality must be maintained.

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Indeed, I favor a "single manager" concept whereby the senior man in each province or district--military or civilian--would be designated as team chief for pacification/RD advisory purposes, reporting through region to Porter's office. Over a year ago, we experimented by appointing one of the US representatives at provincial level as US Team Captain, with coordinating authority over the entire US effort. I was impressed by how well this concept is still working in Binh Thuan province, even though the experiment ended six months ago with the decision to operate on a cooperative basis--not under a team captain. It stands to reason that if the province chief is a single manager on the VN side, we should have a single manager on the US side. Therefore, I intend to re-open the question of a US team chief. He would receive guidance directly from Porter operating in his expanded role. MACV would still be able to deal with the sector advisors on purely military matters.

The RD Cadre Program is now fully launched. Over 26,000 cadre are in the field (not all well-trained). We will be graduating 5700 more each four months from the Vung Tau center and the Montagnard center at Pleiku. I visited three 59-man teams in their hamlets. Many of them were not on duty stations. Neither Porter nor I are satisfied with the quality of the cadre or their supervision in the field. I have urged that the MACV district advisory teams (the only Americans down at the district level) keep an eye on them. CIA is simply spread too thin to do the entire job; nor is AID much better.

Colonel Chau, a trusted member of General Thang's staff (assisted by Major Be, who did such an outstanding job with the cadre in Binh Dinh) has taken charge of Vung Tau. The former chief instructor (Captain Mai) and a group of close supporters attempting to build the cadre into a "third force" have been removed. There has been a temporary setback in the orderly development of an effective training establishment. Porter will recommend any slowdown in rate of cadre output needed to insure that quality has priority over quantity. The cadre program is promising, but it is just one of many pacification instruments and will take time to achieve significant impact.

Police Field Forces (company sized units of motivated, well trained policemen working night and day in the areas between hamlets) are receiving a great deal of attention. The concept is good; execution on the part of the first units in the field has apparently been good also. Because of the manpower implications and the overlap with Popular and Regional Force roles and missions, MACV has opposed PFF expansion. Based on my discussions with Westmoreland, he now favors police and agrees with a 15,000 PFF level by 1967. Again (I will explain how later) this powerful instrument must be fully integrated with the overall RD effort.

The Police Special Branch, charged with the local intelligence effort against the VC infrastructure seems to be progressing nicely. Black lists given to US units

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before operations have led to the capture of many VC cadre. Likewise, pacification has been enhanced by the pin-pointing of cadre and guerillas in hamlets. Here is an area where I think we'll see progress of the most meaningful sort.

Land Reform. No progress here. A study has recently been completed but the recommended program is more theoretical than practical. The big problem is now to administer a new land reform law with the very thin GVN administrative apparatus. My idea is to implement simple reforms in local areas as the areas are secured. Liberalized tenure and credit for tenant accomplished improvements are two possibly workable ideas. Cabot's people will work with the GVN.

Chieu Hoi. Much more can be done. The cost per defector is 1/100th the cost per enemy killed by military action. We've recruited a new and imaginative chief US advisor, who will work directly under Porter to step up our effort, since an inter-agency committee approach hasn't worked. The GVN has to carry the ball, but we can prod and help to insure that the effort at least keeps pace with expanding military operations.

Area Priorities. Clearly, present capabilities for expansion of area control are limited and may not correspond with the four National Priority Areas to which the GVN and ourselves are committed. By and large, I favor instead more attention to those areas where greatest progress is feasible. For example, with very little additional effort it might be possible to pacify the entire province of Tuyen Duc, Binh Thuan Province under a dynamic province chief and an excellent US provincial team appears ready to expand the area of government control. Wherever US bases exist the spillover improvement in security and economic conditions should allow extension of pacified area. Much depends also on the competence and morale of the local GVN organization at province, district, and village. As the RD mechanism at province and below grows in capability and the national level RD organization takes shape, this type of selective expansion probably should become the general operational approach. Porter intends to foster this concept.

Better Civil/Military Coordination. In keeping with the move toward super-ministerial status for RD, the US Mission needs to strengthen its own machinery for civil/military coordination. I had useful discussions with our Mission principal who all agree on expanding the capabilities of Porter's office, perhaps by adding a general officer as a chief of field operations and top-flight assistants for economic warfare, Chieu Hoi, manpower, revolutionary development (in the restricted sense) and possibly RF and PF. Given this organization, Porter should be able to work closely with the Ministry of Revolutionary Development and cover the key civil/military components of pacification.

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III. The Economic and Logistic Front. Here we are doing much better. Ky's bold devaluation plus McNamara's piaster budget should between them keep about 30 billion piasters out of circulation during FY 1967, thus effectively braking inflation. Devaluation led to some short term price rises of 10-25% except for rice (which we got the GVN to subsidize)--but prices should drop back after a few months unless we undermine the devaluation by too many offsetting wage increases. This would also nullify the special wage increase allowed the GVN and ARVN, the chief victims of inflation. So I pressed the Mission not to yield too much to the RMK strikers--lest we trigger a further chain of wage demands.

MACV port takeover should take place shortly. Westy, Lodge and I found Ky quite willing. Everyone (AID included) agrees that takeover is the right thing, even though Mann claimed that waiting time on commercial ships was down to two days. I gave Westy the green light to proceed as fast as feasible (he confessed that after I mentioned the likely need on my last trip, he laid on contingency planning long before formal instruction was received). The GVN also insists that goods are moving out of the port much faster under the new 10-day rule (and the spur of devaluation). Next, we are proceeding to bring AID cargo under the military shipping scheduling and priority system, which will help ensure a smoother flow of goods into the ports.

I stressed to Westy the McNamara/Komer "most efficient operator" and "single manager" concepts for meeting civil sector needs. If the military are already doing similar things and can take care of the civil side as well by a marginal increase in already well-established military logistic programs, let's do so. It saves money and increases efficiency. We're setting this up right now on medical logistics. (Westy would like to go further and integrate the whole civil/military medical effort under General Humphreys, but the latter is opposed). My problem here is not Westy who agrees, but the reluctant civil side. Both will cooperate in the BOB logistics study I've laid on with DOD. My next target for possible integration is in-country logistics.

Meanwhile, AID is seeking to strengthen its Vietnam team and to increase the efficiency of our economic aid program. We've made real progress toward agreement on streamlining the Commercial Import Program via consolidated procurement, bulk purchasing, and opening up the Saigon import community to insure healthy competition. I personally prodded Minister Thanh on this front, and believe I made some progress. AID is also sending a dozen more top people to Saigon. Wehrle's agreement to extend for six months is another boon. I hit the AID people hard on stepping up our agricultural programs, and getting more help from Orville Freeman.

Lagging rice collection from the Delta remains a critical problem. Collections are up a bit from the nine-year low of the last four months, but we're still estimating less than 300,000 tons this year (compared to 700,000 tons in 1963). A lot of this rice seems to be going to Cambodia, and then partly to the VC. So I taxed everyone



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from Ky and Thanh to Lodge and Westy on the importance of an integrated civil/military rice strategy. "Rice is as important as bullets" was my theme. I even invested a lunch with General Quang at IV Corps in pressing him on rice.

Porter will join me in pressing for more effective rice control measures, before the next harvest begins around the turn of the year. He's plugging the concept of a canal barrier along the Cambodia/Delta border, but MACV claims it will take too long to build, require too many engineer resources, and tie down too many troops. However, Westy's plan to put one or two US brigades in the IV Corps region will help a good deal. We will also press more effective resource control measures (the 750 police checkpoints are largely farcical). Next, I'm seeking ways to use over 400,000 tons of US aid rice as leverage to force the GVN to subsidize rice purchases and then subsidize rice sales (we'll foot the bill through piaster counterpart). Lastly, we must open up the Delta transport routes and get more barges. We are still neglecting the Delta.

Economic Warfare. Aside from the rice problem, the broader field of economic warfare requires increased attention. For years we have urged that a widespread resource control program be enforced. Except for some police check points (most statically positioned on major roads and simply bypassed by the VC), few effective resource control measures are being carried out. Yet thousands of military outposts exist on roads and canals. Ergo, use these outposts as resource control points and employ the many daily PF/RF patrols and ambushes as part of a system of mobile resource control check points. Ample laws exist giving military forces emergency police powers. However, the GVN has an aversion to using military forces for checking supplies and people moving throughout the country. It must be changed.

The extensive bombing of VC base areas, military search and destroy operations against the bases, and crop destruction are effective economic warfare measures. But unsupported by other necessary measures, these military activities alone will not result in economic strangulation of the enemy. It should also be possible to undertake both active and passive measures against the widespread and productive VC efforts to tax merchants, truckers, barge operators and the peasants.

Manpower. The most critical commodity in South Vietnam is manpower, particularly skilled manpower. Since some drastic control measures are needed, I took Assistant Secretary of Labor Leo Werts and Dr. Kidd from Dr. Hornig's office with me to look into the situation. They are doing a great job, and have outlined the dimensions for its solution. A carefully worked out manpower budget will be necessary before we can lift the temporary manpower ceilings that have been imposed. I should have a preliminary report on the manpower team findings within a month.

IV. Briefing the Saigon Press Corps. Both Lodge and Porter have responded handsomely to your injunction that they devote more attention to the US press people.

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I followed up hard on this. It will take continued urging, so I will regard it as an ongoing chore. Lodge still complains about his Mission giving daily press briefings (i.e., only the Ambassador should speak), but he can't cover 350 pressmen by himself.

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The above is a mixed bag of large and small thoughts and actions. But I increasingly see the civil side problem as less one of discovering any single new key to success than one of much better management and stepped up activity on many fronts. At the least I can say that we are moving more rapidly in this direction, and I am reasonably confident that we can move faster yet.

*R. W. Komer*

R. W. Komer

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7 July 1966

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Comments on Mr. Komer's Report to the President on his  
23-29 June Trip to Vietnam

1. Mr. Komer returns from Vietnam a cautious optimist. He feels the military side of the war is going fairly well but the civil/pacification side is not keeping pace with our military effort. In no small measure this is due to the fact that neither the GVN nor the ARVN is pulling its weight. His principal conclusions are that the U.S. must step up its own support of pacification and rural development and must galvanize its Vietnamese allies into greater and better effort. Mr. Komer offers a number of detailed recommendations for achieving this goal.
2. Though we should respect the request that circulation of this memorandum be restricted, its only really sensitive elements are its adverse comments on the performance of our allies. We recommend that copies be furnished on an EYES ONLY basis to the DDP, Chief/FE, Chief/FE/VNC, the Acting DDI, D/NE, D/CI, and SAVA.
3. Mr. Komer makes a number of perceptive and valid comments on a variety of subjects: the need for better manpower allocation and a more rational definition of the roles and missions of various counterinsurgency elements, the Chieu Hoi program, area priorities, the economic scene, economic warfare, and the desirability of MACV's taking over the Saigon port. He also has some useful things to say about land reform, though like most observers he misses the point that credit, not tenure, is the principal problem.
4. Within the bosom of the family, however, this memorandum -- or rather the analysis and perspective it reflects -- has some serious flaws and raises some basic problems. Surface features such as its "gee whiz" style, fondness for the perpendicular pronoun, and breezy bandying of first names ("Westy") are irritating but relatively unimportant. What

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is important is its tone of activist omniscience which masks some fundamental misconceptions about the nature of the war in Vietnam. Perhaps unconsciously, Mr. Komer is encouraging the President to anticipate early and quantifiably measurable results. Even with a proper mix of programs and personnel, such results are not going to occur in a short time span. If we expect such results, we may be misled into constantly re-jiggering valid approaches before they have had enough time to accomplish anything worthwhile. Mr. Komer perceives this unpalatable truth dimly ("... the US/GVN effort is greater and more efficient than ever before -- though one keeps wondering why it takes so long."), but he does not understand it.

5. The most serious defect in the memorandum arises from its misconception of the nature of pacification, which prompts action recommendations we feel would be counterproductive. Mr. Komer notes:

"until we can get rolling on pacification in its widest sense -- securing the villages, flushing out the local VC (not just the main forces) and giving the peasant both security and hope for a better future -- we cannot secure victory".

Had he stopped right there he would have been on solid ground and his memorandum would have been most useful. He does not stop there. He goes on to argue that improvement in the pacification effort is "essentially a matter of better management of US/GVN resources, and of generating enough resources to meet the need". Management and resources are both important, but the essential aspect of pacification is one of doctrine. Without the proper doctrine, management and resources can accomplish little.

6. Mr. Komer makes a number of concrete recommendations for improving the management of the pacification effort, particularly the Rural Development cadre program. Their net effect would be to give this program a military cast which would ruin its chances of success. For example, he recommends that Ambassador Porter have a considerably augmented staff and that a U.S. General Officer be assigned to it as Number 3 man in charge of all field operations -- i.e., the Rural Development teams. He also suggests that because "CIA is simply spread too thin to do the entire job; nor is AID much better", MACV District Advisory teams should be tasked to "keep an eye on" all RD cadre in the field. Should both of these recommendations be accepted, the rural development program that this Agency created would cease to exist and would be replaced by, essentially, a new form of Popular Forces.

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7. The opinions outlined above are private ones offered for your eyes only. They have been discussed with Mr. de Silva who is in substantial agreement and would like to pursue this matter with you further. We recommend that the Agency acknowledge receipt of Mr. Komer's memorandum with a bland and courteous response and not use his report as the vehicle for taking issue with his approach. Nevertheless, we should also prepare an additional paper, not so closely keyed to his trip report as to be provocative, to set forth this Agency's considered views on these larger questions.

8. At some point soon, fundamental decisions will have to be made on the shape and future scope of the RD cadre program, how it is to be managed on the U.S. side, and how it is to be funded. The three questions are so closely interrelated that they will have to be answered collectively rather than seriatim. The Agency's written and verbal input to this decision-making process would be the most appropriate vehicle for presenting our arguments on the fundamental questions raised in Mr. Komer's report.

George A. Carver, Jr.  
Vietnamese Affairs Staff

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66-3025/2

8 July 1966

62961/2

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Komer Report

1. Carver's memorandum on Komer's report, requested by you, already contains the most significant observations I had to make, which are incorporated in Carver's paragraphs 4, 5, and 6. A couple of additional points are, I believe, still worthy of note.
2. Komer still obviously does not really understand the "mix" of doctrine and intimate support and follow-through that CIA gave this activity from its inception in 1964. That this mix has been successful was by no means due only to CIA flexibility; fundamentally it was a function of our more incisive understanding of the nature of armed Communist subversion, and the means necessary to combat it. Flexibility helps, but that is by no means the main factor. Komer errs in seizing on a going and successful program (without comprehending the doctrine behind it) and now laying almost total emphasis on allocation of resources and the assignment of priorities. Obviously in a large program these factors are weighty ones, but Komer, in good American tradition, goes after the organizational aspects but, I fear, neglects the substance.
3. Particularly is this evident in his conclusions that there should be, at the province level, the "single boss" who (whether or not he understands the techniques and the objectives) will nonetheless have practical command authority over those who do understand. Further, he sees MACV as the logical entity to exercise this broad supervisory authority at the lower levels. Should this come to pass, I predict that the rural pacification effort will lose its momentum and come to a halt, that successful doctrine will be abandoned, and that the gradual militarization of native elements engaged in pacification will take place. That will mean the end of any hopes of rural security. If we have learned any

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lesson in the past two years, it is certainly the lesson that the military establishment is incapable of contesting the armed guerrilla subversion of the Viet Cong throughout the countryside. If we ignore this lesson, and if Komer's line of thought obtains, I predict failure in this effort and the negation of our classic military victories.

4. All in all, I find these aspects of Komer's report really depressing and discouraging. His remarks on port congestion, land tenure, etc., I find unremarkable but useful observations on categories of problems with which we are not unfamiliar. On the pacification side, however, I find his views, and those he imputes to Westmoreland, appalling.

**PEER DE SILVA**

**Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs**

**Attachments**

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